

THE
DISBANDED SUBALTERN

AN

E P I S T L E

FROM

THE CAMP AT LENHAM.

CE DUNT ARMA TOGÆ.

SECOND EDITION WITH ADDITIONS.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, AND SOLD BY W. FLEXNEY,
OPPOSITE GRAY'S-INN GATE, HOLBORN.

1785.

DISSEMINATED SUBSTANTIALLY

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PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR AND SOLD BY W. LUTHER, 17, ST. MARK'S LANE, LONDON, E.C. 4.

1782

T H E

DISBANDED SUBALTERN.

HIGH o'er the drowsy camp with fultry gleam
The mid-day sun now sheds his potent beam;
Beneath the shade his canvas roof supplies,
Stretch'd on clean straw, the listless foldier lies
The weary files who form'd the last night's guard,
The sweet embrace of sleep no more debarr'd,
Challenge in dreams the wary midnight rounds
Or catch the watch-word's visionary sounds.
Now some adjust their burnish'd arms with care,
Clean the tough belt, the well-worn coat repair,
And some beguile the fultry length of day
With many a barren joke, or tuneless lay.

B

In

In quaint derision of the steady glance
 Now moves the steamy foil with mimic dance ;
 Now languid Stillness holds her fullen reign
 O'er the white camp, and far-extended plain ;
 Save where some lad, whom Fate hath doom'd to share
 The favoury kitchen's hospitable care,
 While the kind toil his reeking brows confess,
 Bears to his comrade's tent the welcome mess ;
 Save that, in yonder pool, which feeds the mill
 Close at the bottom of this tent-clad hill,
 Their brawny limbs the sun burnt soldiers lave,
 And woo the bracing freshness of the wave.

Some stripling fife with discordant sound
 Now breaks the drowsy spell which lurks around ;
 Now gliding swift the mazy tents among,
 Moves the Relief in measur'd steps along ;
 And now, while yet the fervour of the ray
 Forbids the lounge's restless step to stray,
 My walls unhung, beneath my old marquee,
 I give the vacant hour (my friend) to thee.

Too

Too soon, alas ! shall Peace, with listless smile,
 Spread her white pinions o'er this hapless isle,
 While gaping crowds, who mark her hov'ring high,
 Shall with applauding tumults rend the sky.
 Not so your friend---with grief oppress'd I see
 That peace which smiles on many, frown on me,
 Damp ev'ry pleasure, ev'ry bliss destroy,
 And nip the budding blossom of my joy.

No longer now the well-brac'd drum shall cheer
 With something less than sixty pounds a year,
 For know, my friend, that unrelenting fate
 Hath doom'd me to the toil which most I hate.
 In me my partial guardians thought they saw
 Sufficient sober dullness for the law,
 When the gay pomp of battle's proud array
 With charms resistless led my heart astray,
 Yet still (for,---dire effect of pale-ey'd peace !
 This darling scene, this lov'd employ shall cease)
 From early youth instructed to fulfil
 With due respect their well-debated will,

The mind rebellious must I frame to bear
This life of apathy, this load of care.

At Eve's approach no more the drums spruce band,
A well-clad corps, in mute suspense shall stand ;
No more the bursting thunder of the gun
Shall mark the moment of the setting sun ;
Wak'd by the deaf'ning call the drum no more
In cadence deep the lengthen'd strain shall pour,
While the mix'd sounds in one vast swell combine
With awful melody to float along the line.

Rouz'd by the brisk Reveillez early sound
No more my steps shall print the dew-clad ground,
To trace the mild approach of sober day,
Skirting yon summit with his mantle grey ;
While from the vale, to cheer the doubtful morn,
The light-arm'd trooper winds his bugle horn,
And the disdainful charger, neighing shrill,
His challenge answers, or derides his skill.

Fancy no more o'er Reason's lost domain
In native wild magnificence shall reign ;

With

With art which laughs at magic's simple wiles
 Shall deck creation's face with sweeter smiles;
 Bid o'er the scene unwonted charms advance
 Whose airy substance mocks the vulgar glance,
 No more her slave shall boast her mystic sway,
 And hold it proud distinction to obey.

The cold, and cautious eye must now behold
 The grove's rich tints, the field of waving gold,
 The quarry pointed, and the fallow grey,
 With all the varied landscape's rich array,
 Their use with frigid apathy to scan,
 Or weigh their profit to laborious man.

" Rous'd by the brisk Reveillez' early sound
 " No more my steps shall print the dew-clad ground ;"
 Thro' the dull pane the yellow morn shall peep,
 And snatch me grateful from unhallow'd sleep ;
 When rising stupid from a restless bed,
 With all a London fog around my head,
 By gales, with kennel filth impregnate, fann'd,
 My dreary steps shall trace the twilight Strand

To seek Aftrea's fane, whose Gothic gate
Shakes on its hinges at the loud debate,
To take my station at the wrangling bar,
And join the rob'd brigade in learned war.

Farewell the joys which mirth and wine afford,
And all the pleasures of the festive board
Which to our eager claim the drum devotes
In sage, prescriptive, * emblematic notes.

The clock with four sad solemn strokes shall call
My listless footsteps to yon cold damp hall,
Whose pride-emblazon'd windows, richly dight,
Exclude the searching glare of tell-tale light,
Whose fretted roof, in intricacy wove,
Pourtrays the labyrinth her inmates love.

Farewel the friendly joke, which half reveal'd
An Ensign's blunder in the morning field,

What

* Emblematic.—The respective tunes of *Roast Beef*, *Peas upon a Trencher*, &c. have been, time out of mind, beat as the call to dinner.

What fair one's scorn contracts the Major's brow,
 What nymph accepts the Doctor's useful vow ;
 Farewel those manners, whose result combin'd
 The well-dress'd person with the polish'd mind,
 The temperate glass which friendly warmth improves,
 The band select whose known discretion moves
 The feeling boy to toast the girl he loves.
 Now from the sweets of social converse cast,
 While wooden trenchers bear the trifling repast,
 My frugal mess shall three dull strangers share,
 Gazing askant with caution's frigid air.

Can I, my friend, without regret behold
 This crimson'd scarlet, and this tarnish'd gold ?
 Ev'n now my soul prophetic views the day,
 When o'er this heath my partial steps shall stray,
 Anxious, in pilgrimage devout, to trace
 Each time-worn vestige of this hallow'd place,
 And pensive musing, when, perhaps in vain,
 I seek this much-lov'd spot to ascertain,

Where

Where many an hour has pass'd in social glee,
 Where now I give the vacant hour to thee.
 To former scenes shall memory fondly fly,
 And each shall claim the tribute of a sigh.

When former scenes shall rise again to view,
 And joys long-past their flatt'ring forms renew,
 Say shall my soul the jovial march forget,
 Or trace its pleasures, but with fond regret?

When orient day first glimmers in the skies,
 Wak'd by the General's lively call, we rise,
 And while with active vigour we prepare
 To breast the keenness of the morning air,
 The sun-burnt soldier at an alehouse door
 Pays from his scanty purse his last night's score,
 And, as his host a parting draught bestows,
 The cumb'rous belt o'er his broad shoulder throws,
 Adjusts his knapsack, shakes his landlord's hand,
 His musket grasps, and takes his silent stand.

Now to the martial band's enliv'ning sound,
 In duely-measur'd steps we beat the ground;

But

But not unmindful of the window's height,
 Which courts on either side the glancing light,
 We pass along--for there, all unarray'd,
 Sweet as the morn, appears the lovely maid,
 The well-adjusted curtain half reveals
 Those charms which yet no cruel robe conceals,
 For at the drum's rude sound she left her bed,
 By punctual love, or idle fancy led,
 Perhaps her eyes, with vacant pleasure stray
 O'er the long files in martial splendour gay,
 Perhaps she seeks, repentant, to renew,
 With kinder token the last night's adieu.

Up the steep hill, or through the drizzly grove,
 Or clayey vale, with sturdy step, we move,
 While jocund as the party winds along,
 Bursts the loud laugh, or swells the chearful song.

Can I forget, with emulation fir'd,
 When my steps led them, and my mirth inspir'd,
 How the men strove, with tale or carrol gay,
 To smoothe the destin'd labour of the way,

Proud to divert, and grateful to my care,
 How oft they vied th' approving laugh to share,
 While the joke feign'd to seek a comrade's ear
 Was just told loud enough for me to hear?

See, o'er yon brow, the goal of our desires
 At ev'ry step extend its length'ning spires,
 While youth and age, the trader and the clown,
 Sally to meet us from the desert town;
 While many a lovely maiden trips along,
 (Theme of the mercer's toast, or curate's song,)
 And hailing our approach with chearful smiles,
 Glances inspiring ardour through the files.

Full many a furlong have I trac'd unseen
 The comely serjeant's military mien,
 His port erect, his firm, commanding air,
 The hoary honours of the well-club'd hair,
 His furr-coned helmet worn with studied grace,
 The plumage waving o'er his burnish'd face,
 The well-clean'd belts which cross'd his ample breast,
 His strutting chitterlin, and snowy vest,

Sweets

Sweets which alone the wedded soldier proves,
 The darling labour of the girl he loves.
 When (as we march'd the gazing crowd among)
 He caught th' applauding murmurs of the throng,
 I saw his mien elate with honest pride,
 I saw him woo the glance from side to side,
 With more expressive note his ready feet
 Responsive echo'd the drum's chearful beat,
 Stern glanc'd his eye, full rose his swelling chest,
 And all the martial coxcomb stood confest.

In times of yore, when laden with renown,
 Our war-worn Knights, within their native town,
 Heard with due praise their martial prowess told,
 And liv'd in liberal splendour uncontroll'd,
 Where yon old mansion opes its friendly gate
 Sir Arthur dwelt in hospitable state,
 There the firloin his Sunday table crown'd,
 There flow'd his mead in copious draughts around.

In the rude majesty of many years
 Its front immense the wild old structure rears,

But,

But, fall'n its pride! the fable clouds which rise,
 Curling their spiral eddies to the skies,
 The ballustrade which o'er the portal bends,
 The branching sign which o'er the street extends,
 The crowded gate, the bar-bell's tinkling din,
 In union kind proclaim the welcome inn.
 The laden foldier hears that word at last
 Which speaks the labour of the morning past,
 While his quick step and bright'ning eye confess
 Th' anticipation of a savoury mess.
 The servant now, to chalk his master's door,
 Springs o'er the crazy gallery's bending floor;
 The rosy landlord, with demeanour big,
 Adjusts the silver honours of his wig,
 That wig curtail'd by fly display to deck
 The well-contrasted collops of his neck;
 The busy bar with speed he now forsakes,
 And his high station at the window takes,
 Whence, while the proffer'd Colours claim his care,
 He courts the sacred trust with conscious air.

Bear-

Bearing at ev'ry steps increas'g toil
 An added weight from ev'ry varied foil,
 As on the soldier plods his steady track,
 With all his little fortune at his back,
 His hopes to comfortable quarters stray
 And an auspicious billet cheers him on his way.

Say then my friend, when, all his labour past,
 His weary limbs foretaste repose at last,
 Shall his just claim to that repose subside
 Spurn'd by some offic'd churl's unfeeling pride?
 Shall the long files in cheerless order wait
 Fatigued and faint the ruffian's lazy state?

We both have felt, when pregnant clouds have shed
 Their chilling drops around the soldier's head,
 And clos'd with icy touch each moisten'd pore
 Which genial labour had unlock'd before,
 Cursing the vile mechanic's proud delay,
 O'er our warm limbs the freezing current stray,
 For many a cheerless moment have we felt
 The double pressure of the clammy belt,

The cold rain beating on the glowing face,
 The clinging garment's comfortless embrace,
 Th' elastic sinew stretched, the swelling vein,
 The fretting gall, the new discover'd strain,
 And ev'ry stiffen'd joint's disabling pain.

This have we felt and felt that pain like this
 Was but a prelude to that hour of bliss.
 When Leisure, doubly welcom'd, crowns the board,
 Where cheering Plenty spreads her sweetest hoard.

Ah! soothing pair why fly ye far away
 When woo'd to bless the soldier's labour'd day,
 With grief he sees the beating tempest spoil,
 The pride inspiring fruits of former toil!
 His neat attire bereft of all its charms,
 The mottled stain which blots his polish'd arms;
 Hide leisure's fairy features from his view,
 And bid his former toil exist anew,
 No banquets rich recruits his strength subdued,
 His proudest claim is coarse, if wholesome food.

Bliss to the man whose delegated pow'r,
 Is doom'd to soften this disastrous hour;
 If with kind haste and sympathetic care
 He soothes those ills his social feelings share.

Bliss to the host whose philanthropic breast
 Glows to behold the way-worn soldier blest;
 Who decks with liberal hand the welcome board,
 Nor weighs the means his scanty gains afford.
 The grateful act his best reward shall prove,
 Good men shall honour him, and thou shalt love.

Long has the foldier claim'd in thee his friend,
 Long known thy gen'rous zeal his right's defend,
 And long has own'd that sympathetic care
 Which never urg'd the toil thou didst not share;
 What tho' thy sarcasm oft has rent the veil,
 Of filmy texture from his plann'd detail;
 Driv'n him from ev'ry subterfuge away
 To ev'ry comrade's clumsy mirth a prey;
 If small the failure, thro' his wounded pride,
 That mirth alone correction due supplied;

Bound

Bound to the soldier by a soul sincere,
 Intrepid, active, sudden, skill'd and clear,
 Thou hast not scorn'd, degrading tho' the fight,
 To face the recreant who hath spurn'd his right.

For I have mark'd thy bosom's stifled flame
 When insult scowl'd upon his little claim,
 While rage and pity have usurp'd by turns
 That manly heart which bleeds at once and burns;
 Yet with unruffled ease and aspect gay,
 Where prudent calmness seem'd alone to play,
 Well hast thou strove in wisdom's clearest strain
 With calm reproof to check thy friend's disdain;
 But all was strange disguise assum'd alone,
 To make, by gen'rous fraud, the broil thine own;
 For when the pamper'd host with low-born pride
 Hath dar'd the soldier's sufferings to deride,
 To point insulting to his half-roof'd shed
 His rancid food and sleep forbidding bed;
 Has dar'd those futile taxes to deplore,
 In scorn of which he boasts a princely store,

And

And swol'n with wealth arraign in ranc'rous hate,
 The scarlet caterpillars of the state.
 Then! when his impious tongue hath dar'd defame
 The mighty honours of a foldier's name,
 Thy calmness fled, thy form began to wear
 An added stature, and a loftier air;
 Pride which I love, discriminator nice!
 Pride honour's sentry, much misnam'd a vice,
 Wreath'd thy bare brow, the glow of honest ire,
 Shed from thy piercing eye unwonted fire;
 Thy recreant foe a mass of base allay
 Owns the strong influence of the vivid ray,
 And as it's beams the worthless compound crosses,
 Dwindles and shrinks into his native dross.

Need I relate what various pleasures crown
 The listless faunter round the busy town.
 When dress her all-reviving power bestows,
 And ev'ry wearied limb it's load foregoes,
 When langour checks no more the careless tongue,
 And every shatter'd nerve is newly strung,

F

Eager

eager to cheat an anxious hour of fast,
 The doom'd forerunner of our wish'd repast,
 Nor void of hope the far fam'd toast to meet
 With lounging step we trace some unknown street,
 With heart unconscious, but attentive eye,
 Returning careless, as we pass her by,
 The lovely milliner's habitual wile,
 Her ogle transient, or spontaneous smile:

Our homely dinner careless health approves,
 And appetite, stern labour's offspring, loves,
 And oft the twice-told stories of the day
 The circling flask's progressive course delay.

At length in sleep's refreshing arms we find
 That balmy rest which woos the vacant mind,
 Where toil bestows a slumber so profound
 It starts reluctant at the Troop's rude sound.

These scenes (too soon to cease!) whose magic pow'r
 On mirth's light pinions lifts the fleeting hour,
 E'en when my soul shall have forgot to feel,
 Shall o'er my torpid breast in pity steal,

And

And kindly bid me know, before I die,
The luxury of one remaining sigh.

While thus, my friend, in artless rhyme I sing
What fond regret from former joys shall spring,
Deem not I range in fancy's wilds alone;
Another's feelings justify my own.

You knew Tennaile who occupied of late
The snug brick house which fronts our paddock gate,
The best of Kings hath mark'd his foldier's claim,
And amply recompens'd his martial fame,
And now that scene of many a frolic gay,
His former dwelling, owns another's sway.

The veteran's venerable form you knew,
His clime-chang'd countenance, and slender queue,
His golden brow with silver tresses fring'd,
His cheek with vigour's parting blushes ting'd,
His eye where still youth's wav'ring blaze remain'd,
The darling scar which still his lip retain'd,
That beaver which from fields of deathless fame
Had borne its princely master's honour'd name, *

And Sunday waistcoat, which of yore
 On a well-disputed day he wore.

Now have you miss'd, in martial order plac'd
 The trophied arms which erst his parlour grac'd.

Oft have I stol'n from home a truant boy
 To hear of Dettingen, and Fontenoy,
 Of artful ambuscades, of stern alarms,
 And prowess highly-fam'd in deeds of arms,
 While the lime-punch, or justly-boasted ale,
 At stated intervals have cross'd the tale.

Now sadly glancing on his votive sword,
 (While rebel feeling check'd the rising word)
 Thus would he say, " Till all-subduing death
 " Shall claim the tribute of my latest breath,
 " Ne'er shall my soul forget the fatal hour
 " When the hard hand of unrelenting power
 " Sign'd an obdurate order to disband,
 " And drove me wretched from rever'd command.

" I love the vacant heart which mocks at toil,
 " And welcomes danger with a careless smile,

" Whose

“ Whose roar of laughter spurns dull wisdom's law,
“ And finds its frequent object in a straw.
“ Such one possess'd the files which once I led,
“ Such the brave friends with whom I fought and bled.
“ How strong the chain which mutual peril binds,
“ (Tho' soft it's shackles press) o'er social minds!
“ How warm the love a good commander shares
“ Who courts distinction by the toil he bears!

“ E'en now I feel that mute respect impart
“ Its wonted joys, which springing from the heart
“ Sits in the corner of the watchful eye
“ To hail the lov'd commander passing by:
“ For such display'd the files which once I led,
“ Such the brave friends with whom I fought and bled.
“ I saw those friends in fruitless sorrow mourn,
“ From mirth, society, subsistence torn;
“ Their mien no more display'd war's dreadful charms,
“ In fallen plight they pil'd their long-lov'd arms.

“ When on the morning of that fatal day
“ Doom'd the degrading pageant to display,

“ The gaudy Band with countenance dismay’d
“ Stood ready form’d upon their last parade, .
“ And the neat drummers waited the command.
“ Their eyes intent upon their Major’s hand ;
“ On my spontoon in listless mood reclin’d,
“ I woo’d the grief which sooth’d my sadden’d mind
“ The last sad troop beat off---the mournful roll
“ Burst like a torrent o’er my torpid soul ;
“ The cheerless life in melancholy swell
“ Sung to my heart oppress’d a sad farewell :
“ The brisk salute all-anxious to display
“ When the respectful centry thwarts my way,
“ His care unnotic’d may I turn aside,
“ And wound with cold neglect his honest pride,
“ If the last cadence of a sound so dear
“ Had not disgrac’d me with a coward tear,
“ But that the foldier swelling in my breast,
“ In painful victory that tear repress’d.

Our veteran thus---and while a transient glow
Hail’d his past joy, or mourn’d his former woe,

(Fir’d

(Fir'd with his ardour, check'd with his dismay,
Sad when he sorrow'd, with his pleasure gay,)

A young enthusiast, of untemper'd zeal,
I taught my restless soul with his to feel;
For Fancy then display'd her wily charms,
And frequent woo'd me to her Syren arms;
And Fancy still, all-anxious to deceive,
With specious art endears those scenes I leave;
But while her all seducing lay she sings,
Or wafts me heedless on Icarian wings,
A matron, grave, yet mild, serene, yet gay,
With unimpassion'd accent seems to say.

“ Submit, fond youth, to Reason's sober rule,

“ And weigh the maxims of her honest school.

“ What tho' thy steps the fabler Fancy lead

“ Thro' twilight grove, or flow'r-bespangled mead,

“ Where to the tawny cliff the woodbine clings,

“ Where brawls the brook, or where the linnet sings,

“ Where it's brown breast the barren heath uprears,

“ Where the lone tow'r in gloomy state appears,

“ where,

Where, on the shapeless mountain's shaggy side,
 " Vast clouds in magic-varied volumes ride ;
 " While Sloth delights to clothe the rolling firm,
 " With many a wayward, wild, fantastic form :
 " Yet, yet her lov'd society forego,
 " Her charms betray to indolence, and woe,
 " And with her dwells Disgust, with fated eye,
 " Born of the baffled hope which soar'd too high :
 " Led by her wiles the bubbled mind pursues
 " Ideal objects, and chimeric views,
 " And scowls with all the peevish pride of spleen
 " On common life's cold, trifling, tasteless scene ;
 " Yet, as (enfeebled by her syren strain)
 " It shrinks from labour's salutary pain,
 " That scene despis'd shall cross it's listless hours,
 " And boldly claim it's unexerted powers ;
 " For learn this truth by care-worn Sloth confess,
 " Who knows not toil, can never taste of rest.
 " The partial retrospect no more pursue,
 " Which the fair fabler offers to thy view,
 " No

- " No more in idle dreams of airy joy,
 " Destin'd to nobler ends, thy time employ,
 " Assume the robe, the sage decrees explore,
 " Turn with due care the nightly volume o'er,
 " The heavy curse of indolence forego,
 " And all it's sad variety of woe.

Sage is the counsel! with attentive ear,
 And due respect, each well-weigh'd word I hear;
 And thou dear image, who with ceaseless pow'r
 Presid'st supreme o'er ev'ry vacant hour,
 Who, when the taper's half-extinguish'd fire
 From scenes of dissipation bids retire,
 Deign'st on my pillow thy sad vigil keep,
 And claim one dear, tho' painful, hour from sleep;
 Who 'ere the morn her faintest gleam bestows,
 Dispell'st the remnant of disturb'd repose,
 O give to Reason's voice redoubled force,
 And urge my steps in labour's straining course:
 Come with that form, where I was wont to trace
 Spontaneous elegance, and active grace;

to my sight that heav'nly mien display'd,
Which native truth, and artless sense pervade,
Where the mild beams of melting pity shine,
Where courage, softness, mirth, and thought combine,
To mend with glowing touch cold beauty's line;
And with that voice which still I seem to hear,
(Though long the space since last it blest my ear!)
In gentlest accents tell me, that when Fate
Shall crown my toil with pow'r, with wealth, and state,
My vows perhaps may less unworthy prove
The maid whose angel form in thee I love;
Say that the cruel doubts which now surround
My care-worn heart, in transport shall be drown'd,
That doom'd no more, within my tortur'd breast,
To hide the mining pang which murders rest,
My haughty soul shall to the world proclaim
That taste in love, which to profess is fame.

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